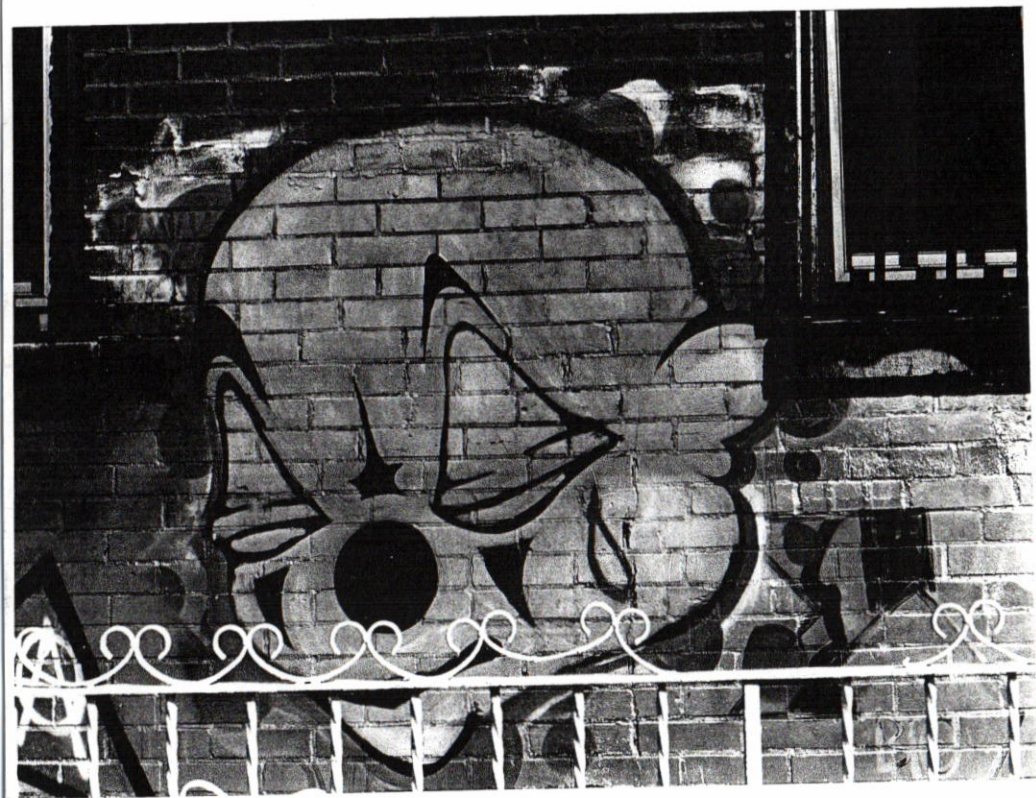


Peter Blows Away



Poems by

Peter Voakes (吳培德)





All poems written by Peter Voakes.

All photos taken by Peter Voakes, unless otherwise noted.

All photos of graffiti or murals are from the Pilsen neighborhood
in Chicago, unless otherwise noted.

I can be reached at pcvoakes@indiana.edu

Can YOU find:

- a.) The poem that was originally written as a writing exercise?
- b.) The poem that was constructed by combining epigrams that I wrote while being bored in Hollywood class?
- c.) The poem that was NOT revised?
- d.) The poem that is modeled after a poem in the *Classic of Odes*?

Must I wait until
To see all of this?

the Yellow Springs

Introduction: About the Author: Name: Peter Voakes. I am a student at Indiana University, studying Eastern Literary Traditions and Chinese, and modestly flirting with Jazz.

Who I like: Stephen Crane, Radiohead, T.S. Eliot, Eric Dolphy, John Berryman, Saul Williams, D. A. Powell, Allen Ginsberg, read the Hip Swiveler Zine, etc...

How I feel about Writing?: I take writing seriously, but much of my writing is lighthearted. It's too easy to make people cry...I'd rather make 'em smile, or shout, or jump. I am a strong believer in revision. I respect Allen Ginsberg saying "first thought, best thought," but my first drafts are most often not very good, and this is nothing to be ashamed of. I don't care that I can't emit brilliance at all times, and that I can't just sit down and compose perfect lines. Besides, revising helps me see my own writing apart from when I wrote it, and it helps me to see where I want my writing to go. I feel that revising makes me a stronger writer than anything else. Second to revising is, of course, reading. Third, would be, living. My writing might seem to have similar images in it. This is not something to be ashamed of either. I feel that using repetitive imagery in different poems adds a sense of continuity to the poems as a whole, and it helps establish a common set of metaphors that can be used in all of the poems.

Why I did This: I, like oh so many writers (why do I call myself a writer? I don't feel literary at all, and the word writer implies that it is my job, and I am certainly not getting paid for this) am an egomaniac. To be a writer is to have a large, large ego. To assume that someone wants to read what I have to say, is maniacal, and strange. But I did this because my private literature was building up, and it had to go somewhere.



warm old sky take the
worn old skirt and play.

[3]

alteration, translation: #23

long the scoffing sound,
 he read more,
quiet gloss fast wraps the page.
 Where it twirls for songs to bring,
A capricious fright sends the footnote.

Were it to shove,
 Resembling oats,
There the scoffing sound
 He read lear,
Quiet gloss fast like the rye wren.
 The twirl is bright in shade.

“whoa, quickly, quickly,
 you dove into the sun...
 discard the shaggy bark.”

[4]

cold sun,
 breeze chills me on my blanket
 beneath a sky blue sky,
how I thought it was warm from inside,
 and now my wine grows frosty at the neck

Lyrics of the Former Mind

[1]

Join me in the mud drawn
Join me out in the
Join me
Don't join me ever
See

When the sight was drawn I never looked at it
Four times
It was you couplet,

Screwing things up

Gain and no	n-o not gain
-------------	--------------

Ain't done yet
You little silly
Screaming doubtful sweet looking worry,

The gates upon us opened,
It was six all along.

[2]

warm old sky today
why you try and write some verse
with you are clouds and fading grays
when I see you easily talking to the trees,

Strolling North-Eastern Block

Gooseshivers and a wuh-ease choir,
these drips plip slow from rusted oaken clouds.
Oh Mother, I've had my share to drink tonight,
The wind is rolling down the street.

The shoes are pinching my toes,
furiously clutching the joints!

Rubber soles hide my steps
 behind wheezing leaps on the sidewalk,
 I proceed as though my feet were bare,
 I proceed with slow mope plops that jump from my soles
 to the corners of brick and frozen paste
 and of a sudden, fade,
 the street returns to silent breath.

Busy neon grizzle drones pulsing honey,
 while my bed sits quiet at the end of the street,
 my bed with creased cracker dry sheets
 and slug heavy blankets,
 my bed, open jawed and lapping
 slippers and manuscripts on the floor,
 my bed waiting for retracted waves and,
 wait, someone mumbling from the alley
 and I hear my name
 spilled like crumbled stone.

Oh, in thunderous tones the hairpins bounce in the gutters,
across the way I see old friends,
old Comrades with industrial dirt
beneath their fingernails,
swooping wide dramatic arms
out to the sides hoping GOD,
let all of them glide,
speaking loudly to themselves
as if I were still walking,
slow automatic nodding,
beside them.

Yes, I've had my share to drink tonight,
and I know far too much.

This side strip lawn should be my bed,
these shoes should be forgotten,
this whistle should jump out across the false
symmetrical peaks and ellipse to the burbling springs
trickling beneath the crowded peach trees.

Shoulders weigh my back into a bamboo-bent slope,
arms with invisible tons and legs pumping lead,
and I, still dreading my empty bed.

with rusted knuckles,
with a heave, a hoist, she's all at the top,

dancing with the elevated red eye winking out to the indirect grid of
twinkling horizons!

From the stone corners
She sings of hollow trees and spilled invitations.



A Thursday Night

She's coming off the docks with dripping oaken fists,
past the rusted tops
of sheds and tubes and choirs of gaping fish,
She's walking across the concrete state from the shoreline, through
throng of onlookers peering to find the stitching in backlit
mannequins,
proceeding underneath the sinister laugh of the train-tracks,
the bleared kaleidoscope headlights
wheezing to stops in extended pathways before her,
past open-air bustling steel doors,
with men buttoned down to scented wicks,
with women in poses against the barred-in windows,
the bathrooms overflowing with rags and rags and broken horn-
rimmed glasses,
the walls shaking with conversation spoken at the exact same
frequency,
walking to the brick corner with the circle lights
and bellhops bending over to peer at her shoes,
with l-shaped knees,
with grunts and a heeze,
with fingernails clawing each brick,
with breath forced out at each pull,
up the wall,
she climbs slow the sky-scraper!
with clothes in a drenched piggy back position,
with stones stumbling out of her ragged pockets,
with a belly full of sea-water,

A Carton of Eggs, Half Gallon of Skim Milk, and One Package of Chocolate Chips

She came out through the doorway,
into the hallway,
Walking slowly and dragging her feet. Sighing,
the short grocery list drifted away from her limp fingers.
It floated over towards the wall on an invisible expressway of air that
wouldn't let it drop,
turning up as it was stopped,
forced to stand suspended and vertical,
curled at
the short edges,
and instead of falling in a confused rush forced
down through the center,
the list felt the light weight from below above side once again and the stern
shove constantly dipping with a shwush back across the hallway,
the light on the surface fading
darker - lighter,
imperceptible in shades different
like blades of grass
changing slowly while the list was again moseying
as in a breezy
summer
shaded

path,

until the point was approached when the list slides up vertical,
held still,

but instead it curled up like a burning leaf and,

Without the hesitation of a thought,
found itself spinning
in dizzying degrees
and falling,

light blinking like a fizzled out fuse!

and the slow descent was gone,

the lolling slowly side to side,

the watching of the ground swinging below,

the feeling of air supporting, squeezing, depressing
upon the list,

gone!

all replaced with a rush of claustrophobic air ruffling the sides,
spiraling it towards the ground,

forcing the list down against the force of itself,
and the list in between,

incapable of altering anything,

spinning,

and suddenly,

exactly as it began,

Go! Go! Toe-cramped rant!

Keep me sitting wide-eyed in the tangled pale moonlight sheets,

keep me leaning against lamp-posts, keep singing

cloudrenched shaken-trees tunes.



photo from bluenote.com

Bopelegy

Toes glow tapping rattling glass clink ice chorus,
hands smack tables YEAH!

Cur-tains hang sweep swimming telephone singing
tones to hububbing corner strophes.

Scene lit, epiphanal arriving tie-worn darkening
sobriety chiming torn undershirts.

Tired stumble, 'gainst the wall.

Tired smile, tyranting and scantily describing
hopbop heaven.

Simplicity skipiting out of burnt gutters and cracked gramophone horns.

Flasks spilt whines across the gum spotted steps.

Tap-dance murmuring cracks and steel-flash Joyspring ah!s,

Confirm Kim's Star Eyes, My Melancholy Baby, Now's The Time

held-up hung like clothesline swingin with the royal bodebop.

Small chuckle shake the room in the wild smoke string candlelight.

the spiraling stopped and the list drooped again swooping wide to the side
so close to the ground that dust was jumping from beneath the knotted
floorboards,

and one last time,
drawn up like a deliberate expectant inhalation,
The list

was pushed vertical
motionless,
for just one moment

until,

again, a slight nudge against the tired edges forced the list to go forward
towards the ground's armored back

sparkling scratching sporadic pops,
catching the list resisting against the slide across the floor,
accompanied by the static hum of dust

bumping twitches beneath.

Celebration of Groves

When I look closely at a Sycamore tree,
I see myself climbing spindly branches
and swinging at the top,

my yalps photosynthesizing under
the rich sun into
a long and loud song.

On the ground bounce rocks I toss,
leaves I crushed in my hand just like soggy paper
float and spiral and lay down soft,
my legs across two branches like open scissors.

I grin wide when across the field
I see the top of another sycamore tree.

Back against the trunk sticky golden lotion
slides down between the notches,
leaves smell shampoo fresh
and bark, toothbrush brittle scratch.

The end of my birdsight,
my flight at the top a scattered fall.

Wright Brothers, why you want to leave the ground behind?
Climb, climb, shake leaves in the sky!

A man sits bald and grinning with occasional lost teeth and a smeared group of stubble across his chin, resting back on a small stone wall by the raised lawn behind him, and he sells stanzas of his poem for any spare change that might be tossed, and he grins wise enough for people to assume further radical enlightenment, and he is wise enough to sit on a wall on a Sunday afternoon,

A baby carriage behind him that's got so many tops and levers it might be a spaceship that secretly evolved wheels and a handle, and a young mother and a tired unshaven father to take it out on Sunday afternoons, and a way that makes people stare underneath its blue canopy whenever they pass, so alluring that even the dogs sniff up to see what it's like to rest in there,

Young kid with a skateboard wanders by wondering why nothing's burning in the streets, with a backpack that hangs loose and emaciated and his jaws working gum into the molars, with constant side sneers at the people he rolls by, but makes eye contact with me and darts quickly away because I'm staring back grinning and he thinks I'm a lunatic and that he's alone,

Sometimes songs come out and smear across the windows and doors,

I get embarrassed when people hear me sing,
so strolling away I shout crimson and hurried,

Goodbye concrete and lime,
I have appointments to keep,
And I have forgotten what I really wanted to say!

In Defense of Myself

Sunday afternoon and I go walking out when the sun decides,
enough of

the day, no more than a block away from my door
and I realize that I don't have anywhere I need to go,
and how boring it'll be to be wandering around a stupid
lonely
city that I've been mistreating since the eighth grade,

and all about dramatic entrances I wish I had my own cape,
and all I got is a confession and a song,
used often as a party con-session,
partly because I don't feel like I've any right to tell any
man to stop,
but I get bored like I get bored doing anything,
and all across the buildings pigeons flock.

By the library I assume a persona and swagger through the marble
polar bears and the fountain,

and no one notices and I'm back to my slow stroll,
I'm a serious intellectual type with heavy pockets,
and if you get real close I'll mumble to myself and
you'll

want to sneak in and listen cause you now it's
brilliant,
brilliant like the arc de Triomphe or the sidewalk that bursts
up

with stubborn roots,
but all I do is stare at the ground, and all I perceive are sounds,
until finally I stop and upturn and look around.

After Walking Alone Through Empty Brittled Summer-Afternoon Cornfields

Toss my sole-jaw jabbering weary tongue shoes
into a lurking mess
of dry crawling dirt,
watch it rise with a cough
like mist from a nozzle.

Force my buttons to back out
of sewn-framed doorways
and with a crumpled grip
toss the shirt
to the weaving and settling dirt
surrounding the exhausted shell of a chest.

Lie in the shaded grass,
the prickling grass that tickles
my full belly.

Watch from the shaggy overhanging bank,
with the wooden-bead rustle of the itching stream,
my yellow leaf confidently strolling down the current.

Maple Seeds

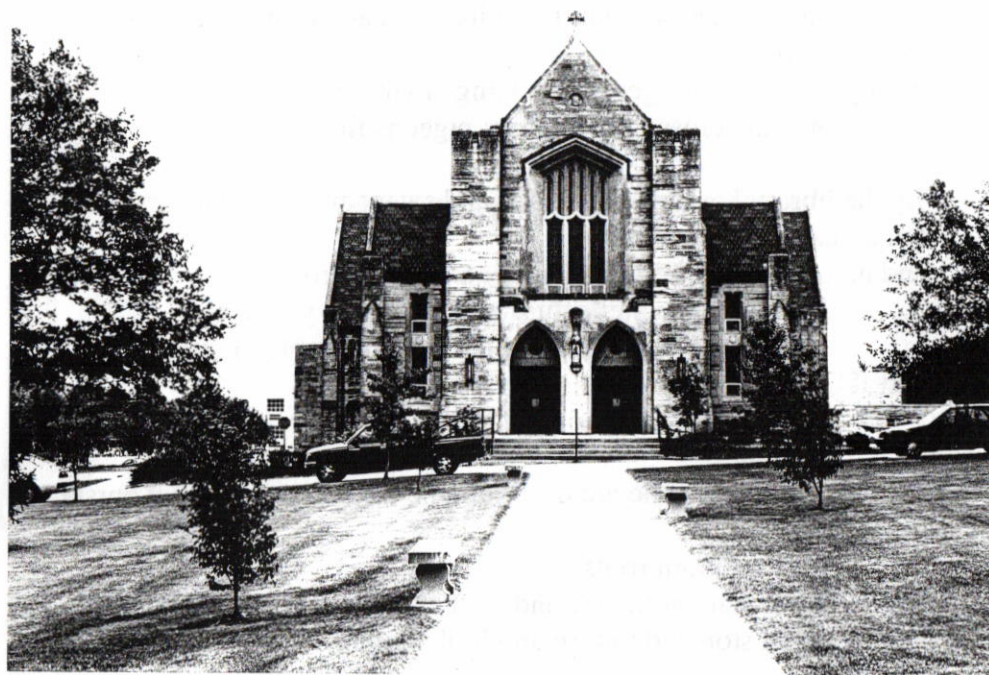
Awarded striped gloves for finding
the fountain that glowed
marble chains when the sun reached it
through the gates.
And the next day, ripped them on passing thorns.

Stepping like a retired acrobat
over the rocks that wash
themselves in frothing salt-water,
watching the stairs approaching up the cliff,
and a slip, a tumble
off the crest
into the sea.

The trees lean silly drunk,
moan rustic laments at night.
One day, the mountains will rise
and destroy this house,
and yet, sitting perfectly still
in the dusty living room,
waiting for them to return.

But I danced so well with a poet one night,
that I could not forget the face that I held to forget hers.
And thus: infinity is turning me like a globe.

tear in his shirt. He let his head fall back (t-h-u-d) against the brick, he let his leg jerk jumping into a drowned-rain puddle, he blinked slow, those smeared, blue eyes. He clutched at his soaked red n white striped shirt like he was gonna rip it off, but he didn't. His fists couldn't even squeeze bubble knuckles up against the skin. I laughed at him, and he tried to turn back to the brick, but I didn't let him. He had a funny way of smearing dry lips against a dry tongue in a mockery of swallowing. Never knew his name.



lusty tunes
of one a these
brick walls
against the wind.

I laughed at him
in good humor
that motherfucker
like he was my own son
hoping he would join me
conducting a trembling
might start some shit
orchestra of the
insane
in the pub for a pint
cause I was in
the mood
his pants
and
watched with mine eyes
to fuck some shit up
his sly affront against the elements
worn into a sturdy dungarees bruise.
But he didn't.

When I first met him, he had already finished raging at his breast,
although he was still crossing slow, trembling fingers across the

Short Poems

Drenched Midnight

Mind or no mind,
I will make it through this window.

Finding Limestone Markers, Etched 1902

Two carved stones, plopped in the ground,
crowned by weeds and broken twigs.

100 and isolated,
no one here can explain them to me.

Where We Walked

I can see the dirt begin to stick,
drops from the leaves wet my shoulders,
the moon can't be covered by any branch,
it sheds light at the sides
at least it glides.

Summer Afternoon, Scared of Work*

So young with amusement watching my family clothesline cause a days
worth of worries!

The blue sky waits for baseballs and butterflies to break its canvas.

Swung from solid white twined locks tied across metal poles,
Clothes, these clothes hung with menacing arched shoulders and empty
malnourished arms,
clothes with loopy ends opening in the breeze like stitched fish
mouths,
clothes pinned and trapped with the torment of elbow bent
dance, with the hip swing slow slither and the billow
back down,

clothes just delivered from the wicked cycle of spins and drenches,
tumbling them out of grimy skins from the overused ragged nonsense of
the day,

clothes that come turning in the breeze,
brown pants strutting in place, walking alone in solitary deep
puddle alleyways,

t-shirts with unfortunate weight problems developing anorexic and
obese appetites for the gusts between the sleeves,

my favorite drawers hanging in a concise droplet, the sharp color
snug against the wide sky,

Jeremy McLipsor Robinson III

The first time I met
the goodly frere
the young man
that motherfucker, he was jumping like a fool
t'was out in a spiraling storm
next to a fountain that leaped in

to grab these ugly
bulbous

deformed peaches

splats
losing paper scraps

growing

in the lofty gusts

he

ran shirtless

on a fucking tree

in a full-bloomed grin

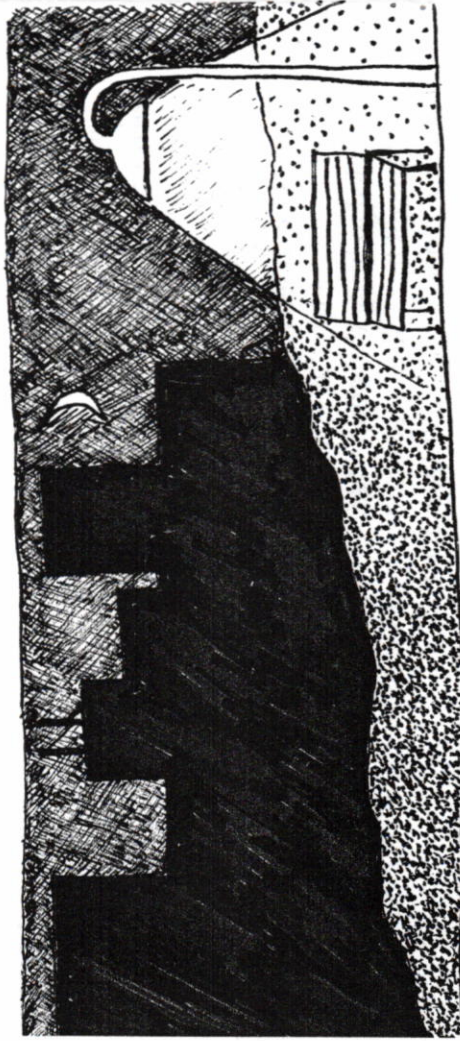
ere I spoke

on the other side
gathering children with each

dash

I saw him screameth
across the wet marble

to keep the feet at the surface, no fences anywhere no way to restrict, no walls to put hinges on no doors no way to keep in, the smoke comes up and disappears almost immediately after being spit out, the lights beneath the smoke dull and rotten giving sickly yellow circles upon the glareless ground, the flat metal path leaves no room for banks or rivers, all lightpoles stand even, a dark sky a strange dark untouched, no glowing emeralds twinkling in belts and hoofs and dippers, no lost blue moon, just even sky as even as the skinking ground, and to the horizon, in every direction except for the woods calling us from behind, the streetlight smokestack sentries stand in even squares until the lights are seen, no more, but with every step closer another light comes back to view, lost in the gridwork of even squares. Floor essence burning tumultuous kind.



Drawing by Sally Harless

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rascally shirt causing suburban blues with a quick dart away from the pins into a pile of exhausted dirt,

and sheets out with puffy cheeks and flapping wet whip tail ends, sheets wailing like useless sails, sheets flailing out with the sharp pin holding it back against the rope.

Clothes, hung, waiting to be tucked away in the corners of roll-top pleasures.

Too old to be pretending about a sight in the backyard with the family that I have never owned.

*a little story about this pome: many weeks ago, I participated in a workshop with Sean Singer, winner of the Yale Younger Poets Award. First off, I am not knocking Sean Singer, in fact I think he's a fine poet and that everyone should buy his first poetry collection, which should be published pretty soon. Anyway, Sean and myself and my roommate and another girl were reviewing anonymous submissions to a literary magazine for publication, and this pome came up. After reading it, Sean did not think too highly of it. And because it was anonymous, I was able to join in on the fun and give my two cents on why this pome is terrible and should not be published, and no one was the wiser. I think I said the pome was "unfocused" and didn't make much sense. I was a little disappointed, though, because I intended it as a silly pome. I mean, it's about a clothesline, so I figured we'd all chuckle and that'd be that. Unfortunately, everyone else took it seriously. So, dear reader, I present to you the terrible, not publishable pome, in revised format.

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Song in Ten Movements

I

Morning, raking in flake-beads dew,
in the tidy sidewalk steps
chimes scrape the cracked ribbons smooth,
and turning lavender slow,
the word heard-thud-
flapping like dove-wings at my door.

Forgot again to rise early for the sunrise,
lost the pink shock to the poets.

While my lungs grasp the steam,
while my pockets fill with greasy biscuits,
while a hiss brings wide nostrils to fired eyes,
my mind traces back to clouded outlined frames,
as through the squeak-white gates I stumble in the soft gravel to catch
my truck.

Bouncing mountainside weaves on in the ride,
on the side one tree is focused to the bark
while gravel jumps in rubber turns,
the tree rotates slow, rooted,
watches me go,
and shrinks back to the forest.

Stones that lay scattered etch
with jerk kicks
by the tread,
seven heavens above this is our sight,

*Shoes clink with each step, echo hollow ceiling chimes
through the grasping teeth grinding beneath, metal seams
crisscross the ground, shimmering from the pulsating light.*

"alright, whatever." You know you couldn't climb over
that, you exhausted in mental paths but still screaming to see the
other side of that wall.

It must be there, a new way a new time, the greener paved
streets, everything that is lost in here must thrive across the pink
brick wall, actual people some noise, some echo some walls
formed together to form alike buildings, even the same face would
be welcome as long as it isn't broken...and we can climb it easy,
we can pile up rubble to step us over the top...but then, what
height could it fall on the other side to keep lost sons from scaling
it and seeing what destruction is like?

We're the only ones in sight on this side of the wall, I
wonder then if it could be the same.

*An unnamed few walk beneath our feet, the echo of
footsteps seeps up between the cracks in the plates of ground, not a
solitary sound but in an assemblance, a sudden horror at the metal
walls beneath, a blinding glare of the light of all the surfaces, a
horror that there is no release to burrow towards.*

"Alright, man, ah why don't we just go right over the
wall?"

"sure." He moves first, wants it that much more than I.
Got to see if I can't jump, ahhh I it

"Almost couldn't pull himself up to the top, and as he
struggled to bring the stone edge down Cody found an easier spot
and brought himself to scale the wall, and with no luck involved
both men stood at the top at the same time."

*Flat out in every direction, square grids of steaming
smokestacks, billowing out at the top, a metal ground put up only*

Smokestacks inside the streetlamps, something rumbling deep beneath.

More moonlight, empty shattered rooms emit the same loneliness, the architecture all the same to put out as many houses as possible in time to house the families cheaply. Cheap artifacts remain, could have been destroyed, but they still remain, and still the reason for all this to crumble lies dead beneath our feet, buried with those it buried.

No one left to answer questions, no more point to asking. There is no good that one mind will do when establishing unknown facts.

A wall, I can see it already, there to hide the gutted street.
A straight road smoking at the sides, going on completely flat, no hills to roll over, no cliffs to climb, no mountains to block the view, the road goes on forever.

"hey man, look. A wall, going off in each direction."

"Yeah, I can see it" am I blind?

"How are we gonna get around it?"

Why did they build a wall when I can still see clearly the city-scape sitting dumb shadows across the sky, no vision kept off by the top.

Something grinding, gears the click-clack old measured turn and screws squeaking at each turn, beneath, something moans to put it out up here.

"I dunno."

"We could follow it down, I guess" pink brick gray in the moonlight, sturdy and effective even with no one around to retain "or not, we could try to climb over."

Just to keep people out, an opaque warning.

the calm sloping treeside where we stand,
side by side, cold breath, no need to implore.

With identical ax-handles we swing sharp and sing
pillows and sheets pulled smooth to the sides,
the fog leans in, slow slow strides,
eyes scratching like dove claws at the door.

II

I swear somewhere
the ground throws steel-laced fingers out
while men sit trembling in rows
buried like a frosted garden.

I swear I remember I've heard it spoken of before,
after dinner, while I sat nighting my untired eyes
with ironed pajamas on the stairs,
clutching the static banister,
listening to the discussion mount
into pyramid stones, out of sight.

From round the doorway the fat one
whirls and leaves flinching spit on everyone while he speaks.
The other voices flail harmony
and tho they try to be heard
he does not stop speaking until his speech is thrown down
into smoke like a magician's finale.
Preaching of the errors where they spell it wrong
and shove men back over-spilling sidewalk cafes,
and always assuming himself to be clear.

Here, where I sit on jeweled steps, elsewhere seems absurd.
I see green walls water themselves, the sun
not yet done yawning,
a time when I should not be awake, when no duty
yet crawls upon my back.

III

Just off the dreary edge
the crumpled cufflinks and smeared pomade blinks
and kneads the sockets,
yawns at the corners,
and looking out the window, struck.
The sight of bright comings
excites within his breast pocket
a slow-lit memory of the night before:

Music in separated notes came with every shadow while we
swayed in spiral snap kick ways, twisting inside sweetened
whispers across the checkerboard, as notes blended pressure and
behind slatted pillars a small smile, with awkward knowledge of
success, these lungs shook with the kick from beneath the flat
trees, and our hips turned across sorrow faces and mountainous
bandstand invitations, with the even restriction of the light...

The ivy tonight will twine lovely tunes,
and brick pillars we'll lean upon,
watching trains trail across marble waves
glistening in the dripping sun.

Excerpt from the Third Novel

"Cody was turned away from the bearded sleeper, towards
Sal once again."

Do I have to speak, will I have to give myself again, I
already went out there, I already did my best to take something for
myself, and already I realized the failure in it, the failure that I will
not be able to...forget it. I'm no fortune-teller, I say how I will
act, but to what I don't know.

"Are you gonna follow him? Do you think we should?"

"I dunno." No. Turn around, you and I could never find

him.

"Well, then, if we don't go to him, what should we do?"

"I don't know."

"No? Well this desolate shit has got to end sometime, it
really does."

does it?

"so if we keep going the way we are, we should hit some
sort of...well, something else."

"alright."

"so should we keep going straight?"

"alright." And what about these untouched sidestreets and
what about the road beyond? Why do we have to persist in the
rubble, why do we have to fight our way just to walk?

*The stars finally touched by the slow train floating out,
coming out of every streetlamp.*

Now I wonder why we have to struggle like this, just to
walk, without knowing anything...this time is dreadful.

Does he, yes, he likes the dirt he likes the buildings
destroyed, he likes to know that pain exists and that he is with it, to
be nobler in the end.

X

slow, slow, starry slow.
 come out pine bell-shop
 and swing down
 and blow.
 come out, we'll all laugh
 to what couldn't be known.
 minutes before midnight,
 and these arms still have not grown.

come out here, come out and we'll show

the exact moment
 when movement has slowed
 past the momentum
 and grown
 to a mighty sluggish
 toe-smashed drone
 waiting to be sewn
 back upon itself,
 to be swallowed
 (we are history
 forgotten
 we are trying to sharpen)

and without being in this exact moment
 we could never have known:
 dew-beads flake in raking morning.
 we stopped moving so very long ago.

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We will simmer around the pool
 while the sky drones on endlessly,
 and shh-hh,
 this memory has turned to a vision,
 wait, wait,
 when the fountains bubble still,
 when the sky turns and the ivy hangs bluebell,
 whhh snap huh snap
 we bring the clippers out and snip straps
 from our backs.

IV

Oh, the time is found again to watch
 straight-edged buildings sit in undisturbed
 sidewalk calm sentry.

The midmorning time to watch newspaper sheets leap
 hurried and clutch the stone corners against the wind,
 scattered pigeons bringing burnt peanut wrappers,
 to watch the sun, done shaking knightly rising lonely klinkles,
 burning for noon to forget the early frantic scattering,
 to watch the empty streets in the midmorning when the determined
 travelers have finally hidden behind gray carpet doors.

No need to focus on what is missing.
 The empty streets will soon be circulating again like veins
 with busy feet, and those downcast faces, oh dread,

he watches the buildings stand bored, and waits,
 he does not lean in empty streets for salvation, no,
 were it all his choice it would still be the same,

17

but when they are missing,
it is he who remains.

With the people, though, still,
but do they sleep scalp against the stretched weed knives,
and do they hold the habit of eternal stimulus shocked to boredom?

The chill of midmorning
drives rise to feet,
echo off the walls
falls back.
Streets once missing
should never have happened.
He should still be
the absent thought of those mumbling
past the cement.

Tired and hard to forget,
when often reminded of knowledge and loss
by empty halls.

V

Slow blue sky floats behind a cloudy train.

I'm here for the kids
the neighbor's kids
I'm here to keep them all away from here
I can hear them coming on
can't I run enough
can't I stay here unpursued

out the door
into hazy faceless holes in the sunset dyed blanket.

A humid flower rests its head on my knee,
laps blue petals back and sighs
for sleep.

All things endlessly march slowly towards
smaller tea-parties.
Destination teeters out of reach
on the top shelf.

IX

Spiderweb shadows and lonely chimneys! Shapes that exist in the night!
The trees that spilled shade over the earth, are they weeping?
Gone are the rocks and the mud that the stream is seeking!
The grass, does it wait to wave in the coming of the light?
The sun has stolen the duty, the breath to roots, the growing reason,
Moonshine spills across the fields, stumbles to a new season,
'Tis the night, the treason! Creeping towards the children's
fright!

And here, where we have lost the sight, the mind turns to the known,
The gears that we built in the light, churning the mountains into sand,
The lines hung smiling with sweat, where our fingertips ran,
What we were watching when leaves spiraled whistling and were blown.
We spent the small time studying traps in our process,
Exalted the product and named it as our distress,
Missed it dancing in the light, what the children are shown.

Danced through the night
after learning all of his steps and from the traced footprints drew
to soil of our own.
Untrained laughter skipped from weed to weed
until pair by pair by pair our legs racked shut in a hideous snapped dance,
and we all fell, and no one could help another to stand,
that day we brought him back out into the light,
crying out with quivering legs and a grimace against the dew,
sobbing prostrate on the ground,
I could see him dance away
through the trees
under the moon.

VIII

We could still hear them sing.
Sun stretch glint elastic around the windows,
open front door and the porch swing eases back and forth,
relieved to be able to recollect eight hours of under the covers grumbling.
Steam screams out from the kitchen.
Ants march highways of assembly to silent tricky mounds,
tired knees bend knotted, and scarred hands on the arm,
sudden upturn as two descend
galloping and tearing the walls
from the stairs,
spilling giggle epigrams

can't I cry out
fearless

hold it to my chest growling in my grasp
I'm ready to pounce
to validate myself

I lift the situation from my back
I crouch here with reason uncontested
ready to lay flat for the children
before backing away

can't even hear the scream rise above the shells

and how will I remember this
and how will it compare

and how can it exist in the same time that I once sat
in rocking chairs
heavy

I long for nightfall (for slowly falling sporadic outcomings)

and how will I be remembered

how I once crawled at stone walls
up to the window
climbed with upturned palms
how am I known

will they be able to recognize
that it is I,

the savior of the children?

VI

Callused hands grip the rail again,

walk home, quiet, like loose neck ties and penny-loafer scrapes,
hoping to arrive at a touch
greeting the welcome pace of approaching hesitant asides.

And opening the door,
the presence of eager worms crawling to the light.

Her awkward face smoothed over beneath the rosary.

Hopscotch strategy played out in even strokes on the blackboard.

The coffee table jumps in the living room.

She sits with cramped back and practices her fiftieth hour of an after
dinner smile.

With shoelaces locked in affectionate unison,
he stumbles to catch his bumbled sneeze.

Two boys sitting face to face
don't need a mirror,
just look at the other and be sure
he approves,

(when I was gone this was all I had to lose).

VII

He was my great-great-grandfather
and he never trimmed his lotus-vine beard
which hid yellow-eared manuscripts accusing the western mother of

adultery,
so they plucked him
grumbling behind a double-bolted door.

I was tired of my hulking shoulders,
and my pockets had all worn through.

so I brought him back out into the light.

(you don't know, you weren't there)

the jambs were creaking
like railroad stop shingles,
the lock crumbled to ashen steam,
and the mighty yalp was heard
when the door buckled and shuckled him through!

He jumped out, quivering,
laughing and twisting, shivering, wept at the lights,
saw hallways lined with frowning faces and still,
outstretched,
left arched paths of tears
rolling down wrinkled lips.

I clearly recall his dance,
begun in the tight hall
and hooping and shoooping and twisting his arms and thighs and wrists
and the tangled hair bouncing off his shoulders,
he danced himself through to the fields
and lay sobbing in peeled laughs
among clouds of mesquitos and gnats,
and we all followed him, blinking and gasp-splashing.